

Make owners of aggressive dogs responsible, says Unimas professor

KUCHING: A don yesterday suggested that local councils impose a RM10,000 fine on dog owners should their dogs attack anyone and cause the victim to be hospitalised.

"The dog must be seized and put down immediately," said Associate Professor Dr Andrew Aeria of the Faculty of Social Science, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas). "The cost of putting down the dog must be borne by the dog owner. In cases of death arising from any dog attack, a minimum jail term of three years but not exceeding five years should be imposed on the dog's owner," he said in a written comment.

In an attack where someone suffers minor injuries that did not require hospitalisation, an immediate minimum fine of RM2,000 should be imposed on the dog owners, he proposed.

"The dog should be sent to a canine training school for rehabilitation with the costs borne by the dog owner," he said.

"Such fines should be punitive and designed to ensure dog owners remain vigilant in preventing their dogs from attacking any human. Such fines

should not preclude further civil or legal action by the victim against the dog owner."

Around 6pm last Sunday, a five-year-old girl went into coma after being bitten by her neighbour's dog in the park of a housing estate in Sungai Moyan.

She and her sister were walking their dog when the neighbour's female dog bit her and refuse to let go until hit with a stick by the older sister. The little girl, bleeding from head injuries, was in a coma when rushed to hospital. Her mother lodged a police report.

Describing the incident as "a wholly avoidable tragedy", Aeria felt that the dog's owner had to bear full responsibility.

"Personally, I think the child's parents should sue their neighbour for medical costs and suffering and mental anguish caused to the child.

"The local council responsible for the area should also fine and take further punitive action against the dog's owner," he said.

He stressed that tougher rules needed to be drawn up and enforced to ensure such incidents don't recur. He also suggested that local councils do not allow

dangerous and aggressive dogs to be kept in residential areas unless their owners undergo professional training in handling them.

"Local councils should ensure dog owners do not cage their dogs 24/7 to make them aggressive and mentally stressed. Such offenders should be charged for animal abuse and jailed for a period not exceeding six months.

"There are many cases of animal abuse in our cities and our local councils have been extremely derelict in their responsibilities in tackling this issue," said Aeria.

All dogs should only be let out of their homes on a leash, accompanied by dog owners. Dogs should not be allowed to roam freely in a park frequented by other people.

"Dog owners should be fined a minimum of RM1,000 if they fail to ensure this. All homes should be limited to a maximum of two dogs to ensure they do not develop aggressive pack mentality and preserve hygiene, public health, peace and tranquillity of the neighbourhood."